



NJDOE News

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Three Teachers Named Finalists for National Math and Science Awards

Three teachers in New Jersey elementary schools have been selected as finalists for the 2008 Presidential Awards for Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy announced today.

The educators are:

- Cecily Gottling, of Suffern, N.Y., who teaches math to first, second and third grade students at George Washington School in Mahwah (Bergen County).
- Kimberly Mueller, of Cinnaminson, who teaches kindergarten at F. L. Walther School in Lumberton (Burlington County).
- Susan Poage, of Berkeley Heights, who teaches kindergarten at Hamilton Terrace School in Berkeley Heights (Union County).

New Jersey annually establishes a panel of science and mathematics teachers to nominate the state finalists for the PAEMST awards, which are sponsored by the National Science Foundation. The finalists are selected from among nominated teachers, who must submit testimonials, videotapes of their lesson presentations and other materials. Presidential Award winners will be chosen next spring by national panels from among all state finalists.

"This year's three nominees exemplify that not only is it critical for students to grasp math and science at an early age, but that it can be taught in ways that engage and excite even our youngest learners," said Commissioner Davy. "New Jersey should be proud that these teachers will represent our state and showcase at the national level their love of math, science and learning."

Cecily Gottling began her teaching career in 1982 at the Hunter College Elementary School in New York City. She taught fourth and fifth grade at Blue Rock School in West Nyak, N.Y., from 1997 until 2001, and has been a mathematics specialist in the Mahwah School District since 2002.

"I think of every lesson as an opportunity to conduct an experiment about the most effective way for children to learn a particular skill or concept," wrote Gottling in her lesson materials. "At the same time, each lesson is a dynamic interaction amongst the teacher, the children, and the material to be learned. Opportunities are seized or lost; surprises are inevitable."

A graduate of Bryn Mawr College with a bachelor's degree in Russian history and language, Gottling holds a master's degree in curriculum and teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Kimberly Mueller has been a kindergarten teacher in Lumberton since 1994. She also was a 2006 New Jersey PAEMST finalist.

"Extending the mathematical field beyond the classroom walls extends the mind to infinity, hence impacting student learning," said Mueller in her award application. "... There is satisfaction knowing that my students are receiving the same information in both settings, home and school, thus increasing their academic outcomes in a positive manner."

Mueller holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood and elementary education and a master's degree in education from Arcadia University (formerly Beaver College) in Glenside, Pa. She earned a doctorate in educational leadership from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

Susan Poage has been a kindergarten teacher at the Early Childhood Center at Hamilton Terrace School since 2002. Although she received her bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1984, she did not begin her teaching career until she was 40.

"Kindergarten means 'children's garden' and I take my role as the gardener very seriously," she wrote

in her application. "As each growing season presents me with not one, but two, distinct and different organisms, evolution must take place in order for me to make sense of my classroom world so my students will be able to make sense of their world."

Poage holds a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Cortland and a master's degree in early childhood education from Kean University.

Established in 1983, the PAEMST program honors in alternative years teachers in grades K-6 and grades 7-12. Eligible candidates must have at least five years of teaching experience in science or mathematics.

Anyone can submit a nomination for an educator whom they feel is deserving of this award. Nomination forms for the 2009 selection process honoring teachers in grades 7-12 are available online at www.paemst.org/controllers/nomination.cfc?method=nominate.